

River Otter Life History

The Division of Wildlife Resources river otter reintroduction program on the Green River below Flaming Gorge Reservoir has prompted many questions about these playful members of the weasel family. Here is a brief life history of these fascinating animals:

Life Cycle

Litter size has been reported from one to six but most litters are two or three pups. The pups are born blind, toothless and totally helpless. They grow rapidly and emerge from their den at about two months. Soon after they emerge, they are weaned.

- (e) Point of Diversion: South 100
(d) Diverted from: Unnamed Spring
(c) Quantified claimed: 0.25 c.f.s.
(b) Interest claimed: 100%
(a) Claimant: East Park Company

Claim No. 2177

the ingress and egress over the existing roadway from the county highway east of the property to the property of Grantee. Also together with the water rights described in Exhibit "A" attached hereto and by this reference made a part hereof. EXHIBIT "A" An undivided nine percent (9%) of the water and other rights represented by the exchange application, the change application, and the four water claims described as follows:

Forage

Otters feed predominately on fish but crustaceans and amphibians can play a substantial role in an otter's diet. Given the opportunity, otters will also prey on birds, mammals and reptiles. Otters are generally considered beneficial to trout streams because studies have shown otters prey mostly on the slower moving, less desirable fish rather than on the trout.

Behavior

The playful behaviors otters are known for are mostly seen in the young. The adults do play but only occasionally. These playful behaviors, such as chasing each other, are essential for the young otters to develop coordination and to tone their fishing and survival skills.

Fur

The otter depends on the insulative qualities of its fur to keep it warm, unlike whales and seals which have a layer of blubber to insulate them from the cold. The fur has two layers a short, dense, soft underfur and a longer, stiffer protective outerfur. The combination traps air to insulate the body when the otter submerges. An otter must constantly clean its fur to maintain its insulative quality.

SHOP
AT
HOME

Trappers
See
Harry Neils
Olson
picture

Design OK'd For Next Phase of Provo Canyon Road

11-7-90
Design features for the improvements of the Provo Canyon Road between the Murdock Dam and the Upper Falls have received final approval by the Utah Transportation Commission. The final design of the project can now begin and construction is expected to begin next spring.

The approved features and the design selected is the same as what was outlined at a public hearing last August. However, in response to public input, a school bus turnout may be added at Springdell.

Plans to upgrade the highway to four lanes, from Orem to the U.S. 40 junction in Heber City have

been delayed because of a court order while additional environmental concerns have been addressed. The commission says the new, final design of the highway attempts to answer those concerns.

The 50-mph, four-mile section now being designed will have four traffic lanes, a planted median, acceleration and deceleration lanes, left-turn lanes, and a separate 8-foot recreation path.

It is expected to cost about \$13 million and take about a year to complete. In the meantime, tunnels and other features of the next phase of construction are already being designed.

Hole in The Wall Gang National Fundraising Bike Tour Visits Sundance

11-21-90
Six riders, who are raising funds for Paul Newman's Hole In The Wall Gang Camp, will spend Thursday, Nov. 15, and Friday, Nov. 16, at Sundance. The fundraising bike ride began Oct. 30, from the original Hole in The Wall Hideout in Barnum, WY and will end at actor Paul Newman's Ashford, Connecticut-based Hole In The Wall Gang Camp (HITWGC) approximately June 15, 1991.

Traveling around the country as they work to raise five million dollars for the Camp, these bikers will visit every major pediatric hematology/oncology center in the country, spreading good cheer with a traveling slapstick, Western-style skit. At the same time, through their goodwill efforts, they will be laying the foundation for the establishment of the renowned Camp in every state in the union. These six participants, five of whom are volunteer HITWGC counselors, are deferring other pursuits while they bicycle around the country.

Said Walter Sive, General Manager of Sundance, "We are pleased to have this group visit not only because of the long-standing friendship of Mr. Newman and Bob Redford but also because we strongly support the programs of the Hole In The Wall Gang Camp. Their group's volunteerism in spending eight months riding is commendable."

Environmentalists Now Object To Destroying Scrub Oak For Provo Canyon Road

by Sonni Schwinn

11-28-90
For several years environmentalists managed to divert attention from construction of the Provo Canyon Road by claiming it would damage Provo River spawning areas used by the June sucker, an endangered fish. However, those concerns were laid to rest several years ago.

Their latest concern is that the new road alignment threatens gambel oak, commonly called scrub oak. Wasatch County Commissioner Moroni Besendorfer reported that a meeting with Utah Department of Transportation officials to discuss the design of the new highway focused entirely on protecting the plant which is native to Utah and other western states.

He said six alternatives were discussed "to get around that oak

brush." One alternative was to spend an extra \$1.5 million to split the highway around a large patch of the brush.

He said a representative of the Sundance Resort said her company opposed removing any shrubbery whatsoever for the highway. He said after about two hours of "knock down, drag out" arguing over protecting the oak brush, the meeting was adjourned without any decisions being made.

He said he got the impression gambel oak "was some species that could never be replaced and would never be seen again."

But according to Steve Smith, Range Conservationist for the U.S. Forest Service, gambel oak, is not even considered a sensitive species

and is growing "all over the foothills." He said gambel oak was among the hundreds of seedlings planted by volunteers on Wasatch Mountain two weeks ago and con-

ceded that "it may be a little hard to get started."

Commissioner Pete Coleman noted that the environmentalists that have insisted that no trees or shrubs should be removed to build the highway also insisted on a wooden fence along the road, that would fit in with the natural environment in the canyon.

"How many trees did it take to build that damn fence?" he asked.

Besendorfer said another meeting will have to be called to take care of business that was set aside to discuss protecting scrub oak.

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River otters mature in two to three years and females can have a litter every year but some populations tend to alternate years. While male otters have been known to mate at age two, they usually are not very successful until they are five to seven years old. Otters, in captivity, have lived over 20 years but the age estimate in the wild is between 10 to 15 years. It usually takes a few years before otters reach their maximum length and weight, 35 to 54 inches and 11 to 33 pounds respectively. Males are generally larger than females and northern otters are generally larger than southern otters.

Otters set up loosely guarded home ranges, usually from one to two miles of shoreline. Some studies have shown an overlap in the ranges. Normally, otters are not aggressive defenders, their ranges are maintained more by scent marking and mutual avoidance.

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SHOP
AT
HOME

Rare Otter Specimen Trapped Near Heber



Mr. and Mrs. Harry N. Olsen display a large otter, one of the few if any of its kind left in the state. This unusual specimen of the weasel family was caught by Mr. Olsen, a state trapper, in one of his beaver traps in the Provo River near Heber. An enlargement of one of the otter paws at the left shows its ice creepers which make the otter as at home on ice as he is in water or on land. Photographs by Len Kay, state game warden.



Girl Views Carcass Of Only Otter Found Wild In Utah



Miss Ida Pace, above, thinks a great deal of her fine skunk fur coat but she wonders how the "Utah Otter" fur would look around her shoulders. Miss Pace is examining the mounted carcass of the only otter definitely known to have chosen this state as a place of abode.

According to Newell B. Cook, state fish and game commissioner, Utah has been devoid

of otters for about forty years and the stranger probably wandered from his Wyoming birthplace. Mr. Cook keeps the mounted animal in his office.

The animal was trapped last fall by a deputy game warden who was hunting beaver in a canal near Heber City. The warden noticed queer webbed tracks along the banks of the canal for some time but was unable to identify the marks until he finally made the catch